



Maricopa County

News Release

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Healthy swimming, is more than clear waters

Maricopa County Environmental Services Department introduces educational campaign and effort to prevent Recreational Water Illnesses.

There is nothing more enjoyable than dipping into a cool, blue pool on a hot Valley day. However, this beautiful pool could possibly transmit diseases if proper precautions are not taken. Fortunately, the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department is a responsible partner in the prevention of Recreational Water Illness (RWI).

RWI's are caused by germs like Crypto (*cryptosporidium*) and are spread by swallowing water that has been contaminated with fecal matter. If someone with diarrhea gets into a pool, this increases the chance of others getting sick. Remember, anyone can become ill from RWI's. The young, elderly, pregnant women, and the immune-suppressed (those with cancer, HIV, or other diseases that affect the immune system) are especially at risk.

Well maintained pool may spread illnesses too. Even though germs causing RWI's are killed by chlorine, it may not work immediately. Some germs like Crypto are even resistant to chlorine and can live in pools for days before being eliminated.

"Our Pool program inspectors routinely monitor and administer proper disinfection to our County's public and semi-public pools", says John Kolman, interim director with Maricopa County Environmental Services Department. "But it is important that the entire community assists and plays a role in risk reduction as well".

Maricopa County Environmental Services Department has initiated an educational campaign and effort which includes:

- 1.) Public Service Announcements (PSA's) for television and radio stations in English and Spanish. These spots are being now distributed to the Valley's radio and television stations including the municipalities' cable Channel 11 stations. The PSA's can also be accessed on the department's website: www.maricopa.gov/envsvc.
- 2.) The new Maricopa County Environmental Services Healthy Swimming Hotline (602-506-7900) provides automated information for county residents who may not have access to information on-line. The line includes messages regarding healthy swimming tips and recreational water illnesses, as well as a brief explanation about our department's involvement with pools plans and inspections.
- 3.) Internet users can now access tips and general information, by visiting the department's new Healthy Swimming webpage which also links to detailed information provided by the CDC. On the Environmental Services Home Page there's now a Healthy Swimming tab under Hot Topics to easier facilitate the access to the new web page.

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Here are some of the useful tips shared as part of the public outreach, regarding what to do to be protected from RWI's and to stop germs from getting into the pool.

1. Do not swim when you have diarrhea.
2. Do not swallow pool water or get pool water in your mouth.
3. Shower before swimming (children too!).
4. Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
5. Take children on bathroom breaks or change diapers often.
6. Change children's diapers in a bathroom, not at poolside.

"If you are unsure about any of the safety tips while you or a family member has diarrhea, then please avoid the pool," says Greg Epperson, Environmental Services Pool Program Inspection Supervisor.

The Swimming Pool Operational Compliance Section performs inspections of pools and spas to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. Environmental Health Specialists perform inspections at all permitted facilities on a routine, although unscheduled basis. The Department also approves the design and construction of public and semi public pools for health and safety.

For more information you may call the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department at (602) 506-6616 or visit www.maricopa.gov/envsvc .

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